

A SINGULAR LIFE.

BY ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS WARD.

XII.



JANE GRANITE came out of the kitchen door, and sat down in the backyard underneath the clothes-lines. She sat on the overturned salt-fish box that she kept to stand on and reach the clothes-pins—Jane was such a little body. She looked smaller than usual that Monday afternoon, and shrunken, somehow; her eyes were red, as if she had been crying. She cried a good deal on Mondays, after Ben Trawl had come and gone on Sunday evenings.

The minister was quite himself again, and about his business. This fact should have given Jane the keenest gratification; whereas, in proportion as their lodger had grown well and cheerful, Jane had turned paler and sober. When he was really ill, her plain face wore a rapt look. For Captain Hap had remained on duty only a day or two; Mr. Bayard had not been sick enough to need professional nursing this time, and it had since devolved wholly upon the women of the household to minister to his convalescent needs.

Happy Jane! She ran up and down, she flitted to and fro, she cooked, she ironed, she mended, she sewed, she read aloud, she ran errands, she watched for the faintest flicker in the changes of expression on his face: its dignity, its beauty, and its dearness for that one precious page out of her poor story were hers. All the rest of her life he belonged to other people and to other things: to the drunkards and the fishermen and the services; to his books and his lonely walks and his unapproachable thoughts; to his dreams of the future in which Jane had no more part than the paper Cupid on the screen, for ever tasting and never eating impossible fruit; to his memories of a past of which Jane knew that she knew no more than she did of the etiquette at the palace of Kubla Khan in Xanadu.

Jane understood about Kubla Khan (or she thought she did, which an-

swers the same purpose), for she had read the poem aloud to him one day while her mother sat sewing in the wooden rocking-chair. Jane was "educated," like most respectable Windover girls; she had been through the high school of her native town; she read not at all badly; Mr. Bayard had told her something to this effect, and Jane sang about the house all the rest of the day.

It was summer in Windover; and Jane's one beautiful leaf of life had turned. Mr. Bayard had long since been able to take care of himself; coughing still, and delicate enough, but throwing off impatiently, as the gentlest man does, in health, the little feminine restraints and devotions which he found necessary and even agreeable in illness. It would not be too much to say that Jane loved him as unselfishly as any woman ever had, or ever would; but in proportion as his spirits rose, hers sank. She reproached herself, poor child, that it did not make her perfectly happy to have the minister get well. Suffering and helpless, he had needed her. Busy and well, he thought of her no more. For that one time, that cruelly little time, she, Jane Granite, of all the women in the world, had known that precious right. To her, only to her, it had been given to serve his daily, common wants; she had carried up his tray, she had read or written tireless hours as his mood decreed, or she had sat in silent study of his musing face, not one lineament of which did muse of her.

But it was summer in Windover, and the minister was Jane's no more.

Bayard was far too busy to think of women. For he did not exactly think of Helen Carruth; he felt her. She did not occupy his mind so far that he experienced the need of communication with her; he had never written her so much as a note of ceremony.

Windover Harbour was alive and alert. The summer fleets were out; the spring fleets were in. Bayard could hear the drop of anchors now, in the night, through his open windows; and the soft, pleasant splash, the home-coming and home-yearning sound which wakened the summer peo-